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DE RUEHDS #3418 3631016
ZNR UUUUU ZZH ZK
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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3897
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE NIACT IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 003418

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DEPT FOR: D, P, M, DS, S/CT, CA, INR, AF/EX AND DS/IP/AF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ET](#) [SO](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KAWC](#) [KJUS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: RESPONSE FROM ADDIS ABABA REGARDING SADDAM HUSSEIN VERDICT.

REF: A) STATE 203665
B) ADDIS ABABA 03362
C) ADDIS ABABA 03392

¶1. (SBU) On December 26, the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met to review the general security situation in Ethiopia as well as post's general security posture. The following offices were represented at the EAC: Charge, A/DCM, PE, DATT, USAID, USAU, CONS, RMO, ORA, CDC, MGT, GSO, A/PAO, MSG and RSO.

¶2. (SBU) The EAC discussed the following issues:

-- The ongoing situation between Ethiopia and Somalia. Between December 24-26, the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) publicly acknowledged sustained military operations in Somalia against extreme elements of the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC).

-- Related security concerns, including the general security situation within Addis Ababa and the rest of Ethiopia.

¶3. (SBU) The EAC briefly discussed the issue of the Saddam Hussein verdict. However, the general consensus among key EAC members is the Saddam Hussein verdict and Iraq has little or no interest within Ethiopia. The focus of interest within Ethiopia is as follows:

--The on-going situation between Somalia and Ethiopia and possible reprisals within Ethiopia;

--The on-going border dispute situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea;

--The general internal economic, political and security situation within Ethiopia;

Local press coverage of the Saddam Hussein verdict has been minimal. Local public sentiment and interest in this matter is also minimal.

¶4. (SBU) The current situation in Addis Ababa remains normal and permissive. However, the EAC approved and released a general warden message (approved by the Department), advising the public of Ethiopian military operations along the border and in Somalia, and repeating cautionary information from the Consular Information Sheet. This information already advises Americans to be cautious and vigilant due to the elevated threat within Addis Ababa due to possible reprisals regarding the Ethiopia - Somalia situation. Additional warnings would be redundant.

¶5. (SBU) The RSO has already carefully examine our already strong security posture, and made necessary adjustments. In the coming days, we hope to begin work on extensive physical security improvements to the highly visible and accessed gate to the Embassy compound.

¶6. (SBU) The primary EAC members are in daily contact with each

other, and will convene another EAC regarding the Saddam Hussein verdict and Iraq if the situation merits it.

WILGUS